5/1

best copy available

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE—Alaska

Wildlife Update

VOL. 5, NO. 1 JANUARY 1980

It happens every spring and summer, as well as every fall. Hunting waterfowl is a way of life — — a means of subsistence — — in rural Alaska. Hunting ducks and geese in the spring and summer produces the first fresh meat after a long winter for many Alaskans. Waterfowl management practices are in conflict with traditional lifestyles there since most of the harvest occurs during the closed season when birds are nesting, raising their young, or molting to replace their flight feathers.

Management of subsistence hunting for migratory birds in Alaska is one of the most controversial issues facing wildlife agencies and resource users today. To begin to resolve the issue and get interested groups talking to each other, the Fish and Wildlife Service is convening a two day workshop January 29 - 30 in Anchorage. It will bring together representatives of Natives, sportsmen, conservationists and wildlife management agencies. They're coming from Canada and the lower 48 as well as Alaska.

Amendments to our international treaties may soon provide the legal basis required to authorize and manage the existing spring and summer harvest of waterfowl. The 1976 migratory bird treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union allows the Secretary of the Interior to establish seasons for the taking of migratory birds and their eggs by indigenous inhabitants of Alaska for their own nutritional and other essential needs. The U.S. has negotiated an amendment to our treaty with Canada that makes the same allowance. Similar amendments are being sought with Japan and Mexico.

In light of these developments the Fish and Wildlife Service is inviting people representing a cross section of interests to share their views on the proposed amendments to the treaties and on how a sound, widely accepted subsistence program might be developed if the treaties are amended.

Some of the challenging topics to be addressed at the workshop include:

- eligibility for "indigenous inhabitants,"
- methods of determining "nutritional and other essential needs" as required by the Soviet treaty,
- methods of establishing and enforcing regulations,
- educational needs of rural Alaskans, as they relate to migratory bird management, and
- means of obtaining accurate subsistence harvest information.

The Service is only beginning to lay the groundwork for a change. The process of legally establishing special hunting seasons for rural Alaskans will require environmental assessments, public involvement during the drafting of proposed regulations and extensive review before implementation. In addition to the legal process, the Service is initiating an information and education program in rural areas to help the village residents better understand concepts of migratory bird biology and modern management practices.

The Service recognizes that many Alaskans depend on fish and wildlife, including waterfowl, as part of their subsistence lifestyle; however, there are limits to what the migratory bird resource can withstand. Increasing pressures on waterfowl from all types of users, as well as losses of habitat along the flyways, demand that we begin to manage subsistence hunting in a way that provides for nutritional requirements but does not jeopardize the future of the migratory bird resource. The Service's long range goal is to assure that waterfowl will be available to future generations of all users, just as they are today.

I 49.82:

Refurbishing the Refuges

Three Alaskan refuges desperately in need of basic office space, living quarters and visitor accommodations are going to get new and improved facilities in the coming year. Izembek and Arctic National Wildlife Ranges and Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge are slated for refurbishment. The construction will be paid for by funds appropriated through the Bicentennial Land Heritage Program. Begun in 1976, that federal program is distributing $250 million nationwide to enhance facilities of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Arctic National Wildlife Range will get a new field headquarters at Kaktovik. There will be living quarters for an assistant refuge manager upstairs and office space, maintenance and storage areas downstairs.

The headquarters of the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge has been a trailer on Adak Island. Now refuge staff and visitors alike can look forward to a new headquarters building. A modern octagonal building will house interpretive facilities for visitors and office space for refuge personnel. A workshop for equipment maintenance will adjoin the headquarters building.

The Cold Bay headquarters at Izembek will be expanded. Four new offices will be added, and the entire building will be re-roofed and re-sided to give both new and old structures external compatability. There'll be a new bunkhouse to provide living quarters for transient employees; one new residence, built to match the three already there; and new garages for all four residences.

Most of the new buildings should be completed and ready to use next summer. Tney'll make the refuges nicer places to visit and work.

Architect's drawing of the Aleutian Islands refuge headquarters to be built at Adak.

Elsie Tremblay admires Ray's new lapel pin, just presented by Gordon Watson, in background.

Tremblay Receives Departmental Award

Raymond Tremblay, law enforcement officer with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska for over a quarter of a century, was awarded the Interior Department's Meritorious Service Award on December 17. It is the second highest honor award in the Interior Department, bestowed for a highly superior performance and devotion to duty over a considerable period. Tremblay received a silver medal and matching lapel pin as well as a certificate and citation signed by Secretary Andrus.

Special Assistant to the Director, Gordon Watson, presented the award, citing Tremblay's efforts in migratory bird banding that brought about an understanding of the significance of Alaskan waterfowl areas to the Pacific flyway, his contributions to sensitive development of regulations for implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act, his commitment to conservation education, and his efforts in adapting aircraft to safely and efficiently accomplish Service missions in Alaska.

Congratulations Ray!

Although several species of shorebirds migrate from 7,000 to 8,000 miles annually, the champion globe trotter is the Arctic tern, which nests as far north as the land extends in North America. After the young are grown, the Arctic terns disappear from their North American breeding grounds and turn up several months later in the Antarctic region, 11,000 miles away.

State Department Group Wants to Talk Caribou

Representatives of the Fish and Wildlife Service will accompany a State Department delegation visiting Alaska to discuss with local people the proposed convention to conserve caribou that migrate between Alaska and Canada. The group has scheduled meetings in Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Kaktovik and Arctic Village. They are seeking information and views from groups that would be most affected by the treaty.

A decision has been made that the treaty will require an Environmental Impact Statement. We'll keep you posted on developments.

Wildlife Update Mailing List Subject to Disclosure

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the *Wildlife Update* mailing list will be released on request. If, in light of this, you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, please let us know.

In pursuit of their hobby, sports fishermen in the U.S. spend over $15 billion annually.

New Publications

Just check any items you'd like, clip the list, and mail it to the address on the back. Please be sure your address label is still securely attached. All orders will be filled subject to supplies on hand.

- ☐ *Public Attitudes Toward Critical Wildlife and Natural Habitat Issues – Phase I* A survey produced for the Fish and Wildlife Service by Dr. Stephen R. Kellert of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.
- ☐ *Endangered Species* – A leaflet about the Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Program
- ☐ *Wildlife Portrait Series No. 4, A Host of Sea Birds – Alaska* Color prints of six oil paintings by Bob Hines, National Wildlife Artist.
- ☐ *The Return of the Peregrine* – A leaflet about efforts to restore the peregrine to the northeastern U.S.
- ☐ *Wildlife Biologue Series: Trumpeter Swan, Peregrine Falcon, Black-footed Ferret* – New facts sheets about three species.
- ☐ *A Guide to the Endangered Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle* – A field identification leaflet.
- ☐ *Migration of Birds* – An updated book on migration with full color illustrations
- ☐ *Facts About Federal Wildlife Laws* – A brochure about Federal laws governing the import, export, trade and sale of wildlife.
- ☐ *Proceedings of the 1979 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pollution Response Workshop* – Proceedings of the workshop held May 8 - 10, 1979 in St. Petersburg, Florida.

AGENCY CORNER

Special Studies Promote Sound Development

The Special Studies section of the Alaska Area Office does just what its name implies. When the Service finds it needs additional baseline data before commenting on development projects, Special Studies conducts the necessary investigations. The section is under the administration of our Ecological Services office, which advises other agencies about the fish and wildlife aspects of proposed development.

The Special Studies unit was formed in 1970 when the trans-Alaska pipeline created a need for fish and wildlife data that just didn't exist. Those studies have ended, but the group has remained active on the North Slope. When the Bureau of Land Management studied alternatives for managing the National Petroleum Reserve, Alaska, Special Studies provided major input on waterbird ecology and wetland habitat values. Under contract to the Environmental Protection Agency, they're documenting the distribution of wetlands in the Arctic Coastal Plain, detailing their biological and physical parameters.

The gas line corridor is bringing about a need for information similar to the need created by the oil pipeline. The division is cover typing terrestrial and aquatic habitats along the entire proposed gas pipeline corridor from Prudhoe Bay to the Canadian border to determine how the pipe might best be aligned to avoid impacts to key fish and wildlife areas. Impacts to wetlands from various Prudhoe Bay oil development activities are also being studied. Roads, gravel pads, gravel staging areas and other gravel construction alter drainage patterns and the natural characteristics of wetlands. Special Studies is investigating ways to minimize the impacts in two new oil fields being developed.

Another area where impending development is creating new information needs is Prince William Sound. Where there are tanker routes, and consequently greater potential hazards from oil spills, the unit is studying the distribution and abundance of sea birds, particularly wintering populations about which relatively little is known. They're also studying the feeding ecology of sea ducks to learn more about how to prevent adverse impacts to these vulnerable species in case of an oil spill. In Valdez Special Studies has been studying wetland biology as it relates to the harbor expansion and the proposed ALPETCO refinery.

Some of these studies are funded by companies requesting permits to develop resources or build facilities in sensitive fish and wildlife habitats. Under Service supervision the researchers can maintain their objectivity, while the people creating the need for data, and likely to profit from development, foot the bill for the necessary research. Other studies are conducted under contract to other federal agencies or, more recently, funded through normal Fish and Wildlife Service budgeting.

Wildlife Update is published monthly by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Area Office. If you're reading someone else's copy and would like to receive your own, please drop us a note. We'll be happy to add your name to our mailing list.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ALASKA AREA OFFICE
1011 E. TUDOR ROAD
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INT 423

U.S.MAIL

5/2

NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

APR 2 1980

U.S. GOVT. PUBS.
DEPOSITORY

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE—Alaska

Wildlife Update

VOL. 5, NO. 2 FEBRUARY 1980

Keith Schreiner addresses the Workshop on Migratory Bird Subsistence Hunting. Seated are, from left to right, Jim Stoner - Canadian Wildlife Service, John Rogers and Skip Ladd - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rick Beaver - Canadian Wildlife Service, Dan Timm - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Jim Bartonek - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Red Hunt - California Department of Fish and Game, and Tom Lonner - Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Clearing the Air on Subsistence

"We have a high degree of understanding of each others' viewpoints." That's how Keith Schreiner, Alaska Area Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, summed up the two-day migratory bird subsistence workshop. The workshop, held in Anchorage on January 28 - 29, drew a wide variety of views from a cross section of interest groups that included Alaska Natives, sports hunters from both the Lower 48 and Alaska, conservationists, and officials of the State, Federal and Canadian governments. In all, over seventy people participated in the workshop, the first of its kind ever held in Alaska.

In dealing with an emotion-charged issue, a surprising consensus emerged on many points. Delegates generally agreed that there is a legitimate need for spring and summer subsistence hunting of migratory birds in some areas of rural Alaska. Opinions differed as to the actual extent of the need. Whereas hunting to fulfill nutritional needs was generally accepted, some participants were skeptical of the subsistence provision in the Soviet Treaty that allows hunting "for nutritional and other essential needs."

The group agreed that there is a need to manage subsistence hunting. Management will help assure healthy populations of migratory birds for the use of all constituents. Since treaties must be amended before the U.S. can legalize and manage spring and summer subsistence harvests, conference participants general-

I 49.82:

ly voiced support for plans to amend the treaties between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico and Japan. There was dissension about repeating the "other essential needs" language of the Soviet Treaty. Also, some workshop participants were concerned about the impact treaty amendments would have on birds produced in Canada and other countries, where international restrictions would also be eased.

Delegates perceived a need for two-way subsistence education. Rural Alaskan subsistence users need to learn more about migratory bird biology and current management concepts. Non-subsistence users in Alaska and the lower 48 need a better understanding of rural Alaskan living conditions.

There was general agreement that the existing system for setting hunting regulations is the best framework to use for setting subsistence regulations. In extending that system to manage subsistence hunting, the State would be responsible for setting user eligibility criteria, determining acceptable means and methods of taking, and allocating the migratory bird harvest to users within the State. The Fish and Wildlife Service, after consideration of nesting pairs population counts and consultation with the Flyway Councils, would set up an overall national framework for annual harvests, including seasons and bag limits for Alaska and each flyway.

Delegates voiced concern that any complex system of new regulations might defeat its own purposes by creating confusion in bush areas where communications are slow and difficult.

Perhaps the biggest success of the workshop was that it demonstrated the willingness of all parties to sit down and discuss subsistence hunting openly and objectively. What could have turned into a heated argument on this extremely sensitive and volatile issue actually evolved into a very positive, constructive session.

After the Talking, It Was Down to Work

After opening remarks by Keith Schreiner and other Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, individuals representing varied interest groups began to share their thoughts about subsistence. Individual presentations continued into the early morning of the second day of the conference.

Then conference participants broke into three work groups to discuss the following:

(1) methods of establishing and enforcing regulations that will meet treaty requirements, should the treaties be amended in the future;

(2) needs for and methods of educating rural Alaska users about biology and management of migratory birds, and

(3) effective methods of obtaining maximum input from all affected user groups now and in the future as we begin to implement a migratory bird subsistence program.

Before closing, the work groups presented their recommendations to the entire conference. Conference proceedings are being prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Continuing Toward A Goal

As a result of the workshop, the Fish and Wildlife Service has firmed up its plans for dealing with migratory bird subsistence. The Service has set a goal: to meet the valid migratory bird subsistence needs of rural Alaskan residents without jeopardizing either the bird populations or the opportunities of other people to use them. The Service has outlined six steps it will take to achieve that goal.

I 49.82:

Alaska Gets 12 New Refuges

On February 11 Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus signed orders creating twelve new national wildlife refuges in Alaska. The orders, authorized under Section 204(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, extend to twenty years protective status of 37 million acres of Federal land previously withdrawn for three years. Management of the refuges is assigned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These new refuges more than double the size of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Alaska.

The new refuges are:

Alaska Marine Resources National Wildlife Refuge – .46 million acres of islands, islets, reefs, rocks and mainland cliffs stretching along 1,500 miles of coast from Cape Lisburne in the Chukchi Sea through the eastern Aleutians and to Middleton Island in the Gulf of Alaska. The refuge hosts extraordinary concentrations of seabirds, sea lions, sea otters and harbor seals.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – 9.5 million acres adjacent to the southern boundary of the existing 8.9 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Range. The new refuge complements the existing wildlife range by extending habitats that are vital to wildlife populations, including a major portion of range of the Porcupine caribou herd, major Dall sheep, grizzly bear and wolf habitats that overlap with the existing refuge, and nesting habitat on the ramparts of the upper Porcupine River for six to eight pairs of endangered peregrine falcons.

Innoko National Wildlife Refuge – 2.85 million acres in west-central Alaska in a unique transitional area between the coastal tundra of western Alaska and the boreal forest of interior valleys. The Innoko and Iditarod Rivers cut through wetland habitats that provide nesting grounds for migratory birds. Furbearers are also abundant. Forty percent of Alaska's beaver harvest comes from the region.

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge – 1.2 million acres of broad, rolling plain straddling the Arctic Circle about 160 miles west of Fairbanks, where the Kanuti River flows into the middle Koyukuk drainage along the southern foothills of the Brooks Range. This habitat produces large quantities of migratory waterbirds. It also supports large populations of furbearers and moose and is a traditional wintering area for portions of the western Arctic caribou herd.

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge – .17 million acres in the Kenai Mountains immediately south of the Kenai National Moose Range and west of the Kenai Fjords National Monument. The area includes a great diversity of environments from tidal marshes and mudflats to glacial icefields. A mountain goat population, the westernmost natural extension of its species, uses the high slopes of these mountains as its kidding ground.

Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge – 3.33 million acres just north of Galena encompassing the floodplain of the Koyukuk River, a forested basin with many lakes. High summer temperatures and long sunlight hours produce a rich vegetation that supports a wide variety of wildlife. The entire area is part of the winter range of the currently depleted Arctic caribou herd. Wolves are abundant in the area.

Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge – 1.72 million acres of the Nowitna River basin, on the Yukon River between Galena and Tanana. Again, wetlands of a broad flood plain support high-density waterfowl populations, mostly migrating to the Central Flyway in the Lower 48. Abundant caribou, moose, bears, waterfowl, fish and furbearers provide a subsistence living to many of the local rural residents.

Selawik National Wildlife Refuge – 2.39 million acres immediately east of Kotzebue. Nutrients from the Kobuk and Selawik rivers mix with tidal waters of Kotzebue Sound, stimulating a high degree of biological productivity. Migratory waterbirds from Asia, Africa, Australia, Antarctica and South America as well as North America use the delta area for breeding and nesting. It is one of the only known areas in North America where whooper swans from Asia have been found nesting.

Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge – .77 million acres on the Canadian border where the Alcan Highway enters Alaska, in the Northway-Tanacross Lowlands. The Nabesna and Chisana rivers wander through the refuge before joining to form the Tanana River. The breeding density of waterfowl here is second only to that of the Yukon Flats. Many shorebirds also nest in Tetlin, and up to 300,000 cranes pass through the refuge during fall migration. Dall sheep are very common in the southwest corner of the refuge, a portion of the Mentasta Mountains.

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge – 3.84 million acres north of Togiak. The Ahklun Mountains dominate the region, ranging in elevations from 2,000 to 5,000 feet with broad U-shaped valleys and large, deep, glacial lakes. These lakes and their watershed are drained by three major river systems: the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Togiak. The coastal zone is a complex of sand and gravel beaches, sea cliffs, lagoons and estuaries. The diversity of physiographic features provides such a broad range of habitats that almost every major wildlife species of Alaska is represented at this refuge.

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge - The largest of the Alaska Refuges at 10.6 million acres. It is adjacent to the Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Range in western Alaska where the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers have created the largest delta formation in the U.S. The delta hosts migratory bird populations of national and international significance: 80 percent of the whistling swans and almost all the white-fronted geese of the Pacific Flyway, 50 percent of the continent's black brant, 80 percent of the world's emperor geese, and nearly all the "cackling" Canada geese. The presence of abundant wildlife has, over the centuries, made this area the heart of the Yupik Eskimo culture in Alaska.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge – .08 million acres of the Hodzana watershed on the western edge of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Monument, necessary to complete the protection and management of the western third of that basin ecosystem. Long summer days and the insulating effect of the mountains produce sunbowl conditions which make the Yukon Flats the most productive per acre waterfowl habitat in Alaska.

The interim rules governing the use of these new refuges will generally permit the continuation of traditional uses if they are compatible with the fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation purposes for which the refuges were created. Interim rules will allow hunting, fishing and trapping in accordance with applicable state laws and regulations. It is the Secretary's intent to give preference to legitimate subsistence uses by local rural residents over other consumptive uses of the resources. Interim rules will also allow traditional access, such as aircraft, motorized boats, and snowmachines; continued use of existing cabins; and continued mining of valid existing claims. New mining claims are prohibited by the refuge withdrawal orders; however, the Secretary may permit oil and gas exploration and development on these lands.

Final regulations governing the use of these new refuges will be established after a lengthy public involvement process. The public involvement process will begin soon, and we'll keep readers informed about it through announcements in *Wildlife Update.*

First, it will try to determine the legitimate nutritional needs of Alaska's subsistence users. Other subsistence needs for migratory birds will also be identified and quantified.

The Service will begin an educational program to help rural Alaskans better understand bird biology and management concepts. People are more likely to cooperate with management policies if they understand the reasons behind them.

With all user groups, the Service will seek informal agreements to reduce the harvest of species whose populations are declining. Those species include cackling Canada geese, Wrangel Island snow geese and Pacific Flyway white-fronted geese.

To date, there is little knowledge of spring and summer bird hunting and its overall impact on Alaska's migratory birds. The Service will devise methods to gain a better understanding of this impact. That understanding will help assure better management.

As soon as treaties legally permit, the Service will develop and implement subsistence regulations. Extensive public involvement in the regulation setting process should assure meaningful, effective regulations.

Once these regulations are developed and implemented, compliance becomes critical. The Service will place emphasis on enforcement by peer groups, village councils and, most importantly, by voluntary restraint. If the first five objectives are successfully accomplished, getting people to comply with the regulations should be easy!

New Publications

Just check any items you'd like, clip the list, and mail it to the address on the back. Please be sure your address label is still securely attached. All orders will be filled subject to supplies on hand.

☐ *Wildlife Biologue Series: Prairie Dog, California Condor, Raccoon, Opossum, Muskrat, Beaver* – Six new fact sheets.

☐ *Distribution and Abundance of Swans in Alaska* – Description and a map.

☐ *Man and Wildlife: A display of Relationships in Southcentral Alaska* – a set of of 40 full-color posters, designed as an educational and governmental planning tool, prepared for the Fish and Wildlife Service by the University of Alaska.

☐ *Questions and Answer Sheet about 204(c) Withdrawals.*

☐ *Administration of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972: April 1, 1978 to March 31, 1979* – The Interior Department's annual report about the marine mammals under its jurisdiction: polar bear, sea otter, marine otter, walrus, manatee and dugong.

AGENCY CORNER

Alaska's Migratory Bird Program

When they're not running subsistence conferences, what's the routine for staff of our Migratory Bird Program? In Anchorage, the Migratory Bird Program Coordinator, Skip Ladd, along with a small staff, plans, budgets and directs the Service's migratory bird activities in Alaska. He supervises two field projects: raptor management studies and waterfowl investigations.

For many years the primary raptor management activity in Alaska has been identification and protection of eagle nests. The Fish and Wildlife Service marks eagle nest trees, and the Forest Service prevents logging around them. Alaska Area raptor management activities are being expanded. The Service now plans to monitor populations of all raptors statewide. This information will become more and more useful as the State develops and planners need to evaluate the environmental impacts of proposed development.

Waterfowl investigators gather information the Service needs to set hunting regulations. They conduct annual surveys of breeding ducks. Trumpeter swans, once but no longer endangered, are counted every five years. The Service bands birds as required for managing particular species. This year, banding of black brant, whistling and trumpeter swans and white-fronted geese may yield data to help us better understand population trends in these species.

Besides supervising those projects, the Migratory Bird Program Coordinator also provides planning and budget assistance to our law enforcement and refuge staffs to carry out functions related to migratory birds. This year, for instance, the Migratory Bird Program will fund studies of goose productivity at Clarence Rhode refuge, black brant productivity at Izembek, and seabird habitat preference in the Aleutians.

Wildlife Update is published monthly by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Area Office. If you're reading someone else's copy and would like to receive your own, please drop us a note. We'll be happy to add your name to our mailing list.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ALASKA AREA OFFICE
1011 E. TUDOR ROAD
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INT 423

U.S. MAIL

5/3

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE - ALASKA

Wildlife Update

VOL. 5, NO. 3 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1980

Walrus are hauling out on Cape Seniavin, farther west than usual.

NEWARK PUBL'C LIBRARY

Service Surveys Walrus

JAN 29 1981

U.S. GOVT. PUBS.
DEPOSITORY 376

If you've never run into a walrus in the wild, you're probably not hauling out on the right ice floe! Nowadays Pacific walrus are thought to be as plentiful as they've ever been; and, if you're just in the right place, you're not likely to overlook a walrus. Adult males average 2,500 pounds, three-and-a-half yards long.

Biologists and Native hunters alike conjecture that the walrus herd is the biggest it's been since it was in its primitive, nearly unexploited state, 200 years ago. In fact many signs suggest an oversized, spreading herd. Hunters are claiming that walruses are skinnier than in the past, perhaps indicating excessive competition for food. Clams are the main food. A rotund, healthy walrus may consume three to six thousand clam siphons in a single feeding!

Also indicative of population growth, walrus have been spreading to areas where they haven't been seen in years. In early May walrus were hauling out on Amak Island and Cape Seniavin, farther west on the Alaska Peninsula than usual. Whereas walrus range has traditionally been north of the Alaska Peninsula, forty to fifty walrus have moved into the area of the Shumagin Islands, well around the tip of the Alaska Peninsula on the south side. Perhaps the most surprising appearance to date was a walrus photographed in Lower Cook Inlet last summer.

Although this evidence suggests an upward population trend, it is beyond our current knowledge to confirm or deny population expansion theories. The migratory nature of walrus and the vast expanse and remoteness of their range combine to make an accurate census nearly impossible.

Walrus winter on the ice pack of the Bering

I 49.82:

Sea, from eastern Bristol Bay to the area southwest of St. Lawrence Island. Some males stay on Round Island year round, but most walrus migrate north in the spring. They need to stay either on land or near the receding ice pack. In spite of their fat, they are not particularly buoyant animals. Inflatable pharyngeal pouches provide flotation for short naps at sea, but the walrus also need to stay near land or ice to haul out - that is, climb out of the water and rest for longer periods. We do not yet have a thorough understanding of hauling out; we just know that walrus need to do it.

Migrating walrus pass through the Bering Strait about mid-May, whenever sufficient leads in the ice open up. They reach the northernmost point of their migration usually in July and spend until mid-September dispersed along the ice edge from near Point Barrow west to the Kolyma River in eastern Siberia. They return south with the advancing ice.

Because of their ability to make and maintain breathing holes in the ice, walrus may inhabit areas of heavy, closely packed ice where other species can't survive. A walrus can smash, headfirst, upward, through new ice eight inches thick, and it uses its tusks to abrade the edges of holes and keep them open.

The State returned the responsibility for walrus management to the Federal Government in July 1979, and the Fish and Wildlife Service began its management efforts in April 1980. Spring is the ideal time for field work on walrus. In winter, perpetual darkness, winter storms and the rugged terrain of pack ice keep researchers away. By summer many walrus have migrated into Siberia, making Soviet-American cooperation necessary to complete surveys. The Service is currently pressing forward with an aerial survey to find out how many walruses there are in the Bering and Chukchi Seas. This is a joint effort with the Soviets who are surveying some of their populations.

Aerial surveys are spanning the Alaskan coast from the Alaska Peninsula to Cape Lisburne. In a plane flying low over the shoreline - - at elevations of 100 to 500 feet - - an observer photographs the walrus he sees and records into a dictaphone what he's seeing and where he's taking photographs. Photo analysis should reveal information about the distribution and age and sex composition of walrus groups.

Males and females, old and young are distinguishable in photos. Males are big and fat compared to females - - 20 per cent longer and a whopping 50 per cent heavier. Older males are also distinguished by raised nodules on the neck and shoulders. When walrus haul out to sun themselves, young walrus tend to be dark, reddish brown, and old walrus are paler. In the water all walrus grow pale, sometimes almost white. They have very little pigmentation, and blood vessels near the skin surface create their

Carl Ahwinona, Kawerak assistant (left), and Scott Schliebe, FWS (left, with a cap) help King Island walrus hunters haul a boat over the beach.

reddish brown color. In those frigid Arctic waters, to maintain body warmth, blood flow to the skin surface is restricted, and, as a consequence, their blush fades.

Besides conducting the aerial surveys, the Service sent biologists to Nome and Eskimo villages around the Bering Strait last spring to carry out studies associated with the walrus harvest. The Service contracted with Kawerak, one of the organizations of the Bering Strait Native Association, to provide housing for Service biologists in Wales, Little Diomede, Gambell, and Savoonga, and to hire a Native assistant in each of those villages to meet hunters when their boats came in. The assistant purchased sample walrus parts from the hunters and turned them over to the Service biologists to prepare and preserve.

By studying these specimens, we hope to learn more about age, dietary habits and possible stress from overpopulation. Teeth will be used to determine the age of each walrus. Full stomachs will reveal the diet, and female reproductive tracts will show how many calves a cow has borne. In stressed populations, females tend to wait until they're older to bear their first young. Therefore, by comparing the teeth with reproductive tracts, biologists may gain some measure of stress on the population. It's all new to the Service, and we're developing walrus experts just as quickly as possible!

So what can be said of all of this? A walrus is a creature on the move! If you spy a walrus hauled out, lolling in the sunshine, you can bet he's blushing. His strengths may not be readily apparent, but his good head will enable him to move up in spite of formidable barriers. And last, he's been the subject of much attention at the Fish and Wildlife Service lately.

Arctic Range

A Memorial to William O. Douglas

"The Arctic has a call that is compelling. The distant mountains make one want to go on and on over the next ridge and over the one beyond. The call is that of a wilderness known only to a few. . .This last American wilderness must remain sacrosanct." These are the words of the late Justice William O. Douglas describing the Brooks Range in Alaska. They were written in 1960, the year the Arctic National Wildlife Range was established.

In honor of Justice Douglas, President Carter recently renamed the Arctic National Wildlife Range, now the William O. Douglas Arctic National Wildlife Range. In his proclamation, President Carter said, "It is fitting to memorialize this great American with one of America's most remarkable places. The area that will henceforth bear his name is an environment that offers the solitude and grandeur of vast arctic spaces as well as the vitality of a breeding ground for thousands of birds and for one of the largest remaining caribou herds on earth."

Act Now!...or Lose Your Label

It's time to update our mailing list again. If you wish to remain on the mailing list to receive *Wildlife Update* and other materials from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Area Office, you'll need to fill out and return this portion of your newsletter. Under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974, we may have to release to the public, on request, the names and addresses of people on our mailing list. Please consider this fact in deciding whether or not you wish to remain on our mailing list. IF WE DO NOT HEAR FROM YOU, YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS WILL BE REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

I wish to remain on the mailing list of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Area Office. I understand that my name and address may be released to persons requesting them under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974

Signature _____ *Date* _____

Please be sure your address label is correct and still securely attached to the back side of this page.

Agency Corner

Bob Stevens Leaves FWS

After devoting eighteen years to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bob Stevens has opted out for a new career. The Public Information Officer for the Alaska Area Office, affectionately and appropriately known as BS, is starting seminary school in the fall. Bob's warmth, humor and competence will be missed by all of us who worked with him.

Bob began his wildlife career as a student trainee in 1962 at Virginia's Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. He proceeded to manage Savannah (Blackbeard) National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia, Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge in Tennessee, Gulf Island National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi, and returned to Chincoteague before leaving the Southeast for Alaska.

An assignment with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act staff lured Bob to Alaska in 1972. He worked on the team that wrote draft and final environmental impact statements for nine proposed wildlife refuges. For outstanding work on that enormous task, Bob received a Special Achievement Award and a personal letter from Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C.B. Morton.

Bob had long realized the need to work with people to nurture the attitudes that would best serve wildlife. In 1974 he applied for and was selected to be the first Public Information Officer for the Alaska Area Office. In that capacity, he served on the directorate of the Alaska Area Office for eight years. While he was Public Information Officer, Bob built up a staff of five people and initiated, among other things, the *Wildlife Update*.

Wildlife Update **is published monthly by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Area Office. If you're reading someone else's copy and would like to receive your own, please drop us a note. We'll be happy to add your name to our mailing list.**

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Alaska Area Office
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Official Business
Penalty For Private Use $300

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INT 423

U.S.MAIL

5/4

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE—Alaska

Wildlife Update

Volume 5, Number 4 November / December 1980

NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

JAN 29 1981

U.S. GOVT. PUBS.
DEPOSITORY 376

Lands Legislation Signed: Alaskans Anticipate Change

Keith M. Schreiner talks about the changes he foresees

How will THE Act change OUR act?

Schreiner: "The Service must develop comprehensive plans for ten brand-new refuges and six older refuges, within seven years. This will take a tremendous planning effort. We have the lead on the North Slope oil and gas study, the first phase of which must be completed within 18 months. There are many other deadlines to deal with. The first thing we have to do is establish a chronology of deadlined activities and then build each deadlined activity into a plan with milepost objectives so we achieve our goals by the required dates.

"We will have to do first things first. We've always had priorities and deadlines, but the clock started running on these deadlines the day the bill was signed. The mandates won't wait until we're staffed and funded. Despite the additional workload, I don't expect new funds or additional team members for six to nine months.

"We are going to inform the public right away about what the law says and doesn't say. We will start soon after January 1 with newspaper ads, video tapes and radio tapes. I have a commitment to hold public meetings in a number of villages and cities in the first two months. Informing the public will be the first big hurdle for us to clear. At the same time we'll be planning intensively to achieve short-fuse deadlines, of which there are a multitude."

What else do you foresee for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Schreiner: " The other major lead role that we will have among Federal agencies is clearinghouse responsibility for all subsistence research and the subsistence grant-in-aid program. In addition to that, we will have the lead role for everything in the bill that occurs on lands that we administer.

"Oh! And I predict that, administratively, we'll soon become a Region. The size of our staff will ultimately increase manyfold."

(Editor's note: As we go to press we have learned that Alaska is a Region.)

How is it going to affect the people of Alaska?

Schreiner: "There are people — citizens, taxpayers — who view this law as a dastardly deed, and they feel very strongly about it. We must go through a healing process. What will likely happen to the people in Alaska is that — after they get over the shock of realizing there's considerable Federal land in their State and it's probably here to stay — their lives will be little affected except for the increased money that will come into Alaska through the Federal window.

"What it's going to mean to them, in the long term, though, is that a portion of the wildlife and wild lands in Alaska will stay wilder longer.

"My opinion is that the Native people are going to get an even break through the lands law where they probably wouldn't have otherwise. Those who choose a primitive lifestyle are going to be able to retain it to some degree.

"When development, construction and industry are added to the Alaskan landscape, planning will be done with an environmental conscience. This could mean more costs to taxpayers; but I still believe that most people, given the honest choice of having it done right and paying more, or letting it happen any old way and paying less, would support environmentally sound programs that cost a little more."

Alaskans will have a voice in setting the rules on FWS lands, won't they?

Schreiner: "Alaskans are going to have greater opportunities to participate in the Federal decision-making process than they have ever known or ever thought possible before. Those who are interested are going to have an opportunity to make their wants, thoughts and recommendations clearly known; and they're going to get feedback. Those who participate in our public involvement processes are going to understand what was accepted and what wasn't, and why it wasn't."

Is there anything else you want to say about the Lands Act?

Schreiner: "It's going to be months, if not years, before we fully comprehend the intricate and complex features of the law. It will take many legal interpretations and, perhaps ultimately, a few court decisions to understand what it all means.

"Many people worked hard for years to get this piece of legislation. But the sum of all the effort that has gone into it so far is peanuts compared to what's going to go into the implementation of the act.

(Continued on Page 2)

I 49.82:

"We have a tremendous responsibility, which I look at as an equally tremendous opportunity: this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a fish and wildlife manager. We, our children, and many future generations will know that we really did something meaningful and lasting for fish and wildlife resources.

"The bottom line, which most people will comprehend because numbers sometimes express more than words, is that the Fish and Wildlife Service now has the responsibility for managing roughly 76 million acres of national wildlife refuge lands in the State of Alaska!" □□□

Schreiner Receives Meritorious Executive Award

Keith M. Schreiner, Alaska area director, received the Meritorious Executive Award during ceremonies in Washington, D.C., October 21. Undersecretary of the Interior James A. Joseph made the presentation at the Annual Honor Awards Convocation.

There are only 22 Fish and Wildlife Service employees in the new senior executive service nationwide. Schreiner was one of nine top Service employees recognized for outstanding performance during Fiscal Year 1980 in the senior executive service.

The prestigious recognition also includes a $10,000 payment, a certificate of recognition signed by President Carter, and a silver pin.

Schreiner expressed his appreciation to all Alaska employees for their support of Service programs. "One of the reasons why regional directors get awards like this is because of the highly meritorious people who do all the work," he quipped. □□□

Kenai Refuge Planners Seek Public Comment

What will the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge be like in the year 2000?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking your help to answer this question. The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Planning Team is beginning to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive conservation plan which will form the basis for the management and operation of the refuge during the next 10-20 years.

Public involvement is a vital part of the planning process during this early stage of development. All concerned individuals and groups are encouraged to participate in the cooperative effort to plan for the future of the Kenai Refuge. The Service is committed to this effort, primarily to ensure that future management of the refuge will accommodate public needs and interests to the extent the laws and regulations permit.

Preliminary information about the plan is being distributed through Kenai planning bulletins. Anyone interested in receiving information about the plan should request to be put on the mailing list. For information contact:

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Planning Team
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

The League of Women Voters of Alaska conducted a series of workshops during November in Seward, Soldotna, Homer and Anchorage. The purpose of these meetings was to gather information for the Service on issues of public concern regarding future management of the Kenai Refuge. In addition to the meetings, the League operated a telephone hotline to provide the public with another avenue for expressing concerns. The League will compile the information gathered from these sources and provide the Planning Team with a written report of the issues and concerns expressed by the public.

The Team will review and assess the data provided by the League to determine which public proposals are compatible with the wildlife conservation purposes of the refuge in accordance with current policies and regulations.

The next Kenai planning bulletin (scheduled for distribution in mid-January) will present the issues of public concern and discuss which issues can or cannot be included in the comprehensive planning process and why. □□□

Refuge Manager Bob Delaney answers questions at the public meeting in Soldotna (photo by Mary Ford, Courtesy of *Peninsula Clarion*).

Director's EEO Award Goes to Red Sheldon

Mitchell "Red" Sheldon, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge manager, received the Director's Equal Employment Opportunity Achievement Award in recognition of his efforts to promote the EEO Program while he was assigned to the Salt Lake City area office. Keith M. Schreiner, Alaska area director, made the presentation in Anchorage October 28 on behalf of Director Greenwalt.

Sheldon's EEO efforts include the training and placement of American Indians in higher positions, conversion of females with professional degrees from support services and biological technician positions to their full professional levels in the refuge

manager and related series, placement of minorities and females into supervisory positions associated with the Young Adult Conservation Corps, and the establishment of a person of Spanish descent as the project leader of a prominent national wildlife refuge. □□□

Keith Schreiner congratulates Red Sheldon

Keith Bayha, Assistant Area Director for Environment

Keith Bayha has been named the new assistant area director for environment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska.

Bayha, a native of Michigan, began his Service career in 1962 as a wildlife aide at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan.

After graduating from Michigan State University in 1963 with a degree in wildlife management, he worked as a wildlife technician at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota.

Bayha went on to Boise, Idaho, as a fish and wildlife biologist in the Ecological Services Program. As a result of his work on instream flow methodology in Boise, he was detailed to the Office of Land Use and Water Planning in Washington, D.C., where he served as departmental coordinator for the Second National Assessment of Water and Related Land Resources as well as coordinator for Service input to the assessment.

Bayha comes to Alaska from the Office of Biological Service's Cooperative Instream Flow Service Group in Ft. Collins, Colorado. He is enthusiastic about his new assignment and considers it to be "the culmination of a lifelong dream — to live and work in Alaska." □□□

George Sura

George Sura Appointed Public Information Officer

Area Director Keith Schreiner has assigned the task of managing the Alaska public affairs program to George Sura, a long-time professional in the wildlife information field.

The new Alaska public affairs officer has Federal, state and newspaper experience. He transfers to Anchorage from Minneapolis, where for the past five years he served as regional public affairs officer for the Service's north central region.

Prior to joining the Service, Sura worked for nine years as editor of *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine, the official publication of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Preceding his editorship in Cheyenne, he spent 12 years with the Columbus (Ohio) *Dispatch* and earned a berth on the staff of the *Dispatch* Sunday magazine.

Of Alaska, Sura says, "I'm fond of mountains and game and pristine areas. I see my new assignment as a privilege ... the people and resources of Alaska are very special."

A native of southwest Pennsylvania, he and his wife, Harriet, plan to reside in Anchorage. They have three sons. □□□

Keith Bayha

Due to production difficulties, we're sending two issues of *Wildlife Update* at once. We hope you'll have time to enjoy both issues over the coming holidays.

Time has caught up with us. The name of the William O. Douglas Arctic National Wildlife Range has changed again. The new lands legislation created the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

ATTENTION

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ALASKA AREA OFFICE
1011 E. TUDOR ROAD
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INT 423

U.S.MAIL